



State of Wisconsin

Department of Workforce Development

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Secretary Gassman Awards Injury Prevention Grant to Healthcare Workforce Network

Governor Doyle's *Safe Lifting Initiative* will help health care workers avoid back injuries

Ashland – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today announced that Memorial Medical Center in Ashland, the Burnett Medical Center in Grantsburg and Flambeau Hospital in Park River Falls will receive \$20,000 for a project to help prevent worker injuries. The grant is awarded as part of Governor Jim Doyle's *Safe Lift Initiative* to help nurses and other health care workers avoid injuries when moving patients.

"We are pleased these health care providers have joined together to prevent injuries to their workers. Each of these facilities provides valuable services in meeting health care needs of residents of Northwest Wisconsin," Secretary Gassman said. "This grant will help the employees continue to provide essential care by preventing injuries on the job. Health care workers can suffer serious back injuries when moving patients, which can end careers and undermine patient care."

According to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, six of the top ten occupations at highest risk for back injuries are in health care. Depending on the severity, such injuries can sideline workers temporarily or end their careers entirely. The risk of injuries can also discourage others from nursing or other health care careers and these combined factors can increase the cost of worker's compensation and health care overall.

Governor Doyle developed the *Safe Lifting Initiative* as part of Grow Wisconsin, his comprehensive plan for economic and workforce development. A total of \$325,000 in federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) money is funding the demonstration projects.

The demonstration projects were selected with guidance from the Select Committee on Health Care Workforce Development. The committee's mission is to identify and help implement top-priority, immediate and long-term strategies for addressing health care worker shortages in Wisconsin.

The consortium of Memorial Medical Center, Burnett Medical Center and Flambeau Hospital will train 394 employees on the proper use of lifting equipment. This project is in collaboration with Northwest Wisconsin Concentrated Employment Program, Inc., (Northwest CEP) which is based in Ashland.

- 30 -